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New Campaign Urges Iowans to Speak Out Against Synthetic Drugs

DES MOINES – State and local officials joined Iowa's First Lady and other representatives of the Partnership at Drug-Free Iowa.org Monday to announce a public education campaign to prevent synthetic drug use in Iowa.

"The growing availability and use of synthetic drugs, particularly among Iowa youth who mistakenly perceive these substances as safe, is a dangerous combination," said First Lady Chris Branstad. "I urge all Iowans to speak out against synthetic drugs, because talking with children about these products now may save a life later."

Synthetic cannabinoids and cathinones often are marketed as herbal incense, potpourri or bath salts. However, they have no known redeeming qualities, and produce hallucinogenic and stimulant effects that are sending an increasing number of Iowa teenagers to hospitals for emergency treatment.

"The 'Speak Out Against Synthetic Drugs' campaign calls on Iowa media partners to run new public service messages to help parents and other key influencers talk with kids," said Peter Komendowski, President of the Partnership at Drug-Free Iowa.org. "Even if these products are being sold by a small number of retailers, we want all Iowans to know that synthetic drugs are not safe."

The new public education initiative includes public service messages featuring the First Lady, an emergency room physician and Iowa's drug policy coordinator. The public service messages and other informational materials provide tips on identifying and talking about synthetic drugs, and training materials for professionals.

Iowa's "Speak Out Against Synthetic Drugs" campaign was developed by the Partnership at Drug-Free Iowa.org in cooperation with the Governor's Office of Drug Control Policy and the Iowa Substance Abuse Information Center.

Iowans wanting additional information on synthetic drugs, or in need of emergency assistance, should call the Iowa Substance Information Center's toll-free 24/7 Help Line at 1-866-242-4111.